

The William Biddle House  
Kinkora, Burlington County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-527

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Owner: Angelo R. Sangiovanni and wife

Date of Erection: About 1684 and remodelled about 1775

Architect: Unknown

Builder: William Biddle Sr. (d. 1711)

Present Condition: Good, with remodelling ca. 1775  
and modern additions

Number of Stories: Two and cellar and garret

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - timber  
frame (clapboards modern)

Interior walls - plaster on  
board partitions

Chimney - brick, built into  
inside of gable end wall

Roof - gable, modern rubberoid  
shingle roofing

Historical Data:

William Biddle, for whom this house was built near the bank of the Delaware River about 1684, came from the parish of St. Buttolph, London, to Barbadoes Island by 1680 and in the summer of the next year arrived in Burlington, New Jersey, with his wife Sarah (Kemp) who died in 1709 at the age of 75 years, a son William born 4th of 10th month 1669, and a daughter Sarah born 2nd of 10th mo. 1678. The father had suffered imprisonment with others in Newgate gaol in

London for being a Quaker, and hence sought religious freedom in America.

By deed of 23 January 1676, William Penn and others, trustees of the creditors of Edward Byllynge, had conveyed to Thomas Olive, Daniel Wills, and William Biddle a whole share or propriety in West New Jersey lands, and by deed of 4 April 1677, the first two grantees conveyed part of their interest in the same to the last named. Accordingly, a tract on Rancocas Creek in Burlington County was laid out for Biddle in 1678, and after his arrival in 1681 he evidently took up residence thereon, built a cabin and kept a store, as the contemporary description of him as "merchant" indicates. Controversy in regard to property lines there apparently induced the immigrant to remove to his other lands. On 17 January 1681, a tract of 500 acres against that island, fronting the Delaware River 65 chains and extending south into the woods some 77 chains, in Mansfield Township, Burlington County, was also surveyed to William Biddle, "yeoman" (landowner). The said island thus lying between William Penn's great manor of Pennsbury on the north bank of the river and William Biddle's estate on the south bank, was claimed as part of the former, but was finally awarded to Biddle.

To this 500 acre tract, he gave the name Mount Hope, and thereon built the house (here considered) about 1684, and resided there until his death between June 23 and December 26, 1711, the dates of his will and of the inventory of his personal estate. This William Biddle owned very considerable other real estate in the County, including a tract of 635 acres next above his Mount Hope plantation on the river, one of 100 acres at Spring Hill (Bordentown?), and others of 500 and of 323 acres at "Oneanickon". He appeared at the first session of the Legislature, held at Burlington on 2 May 1682, as a member from the County, was selected by the Governor as one of his Council, and at the same session was appointed one

of the judges of the County Courts, and became a member of the Council of Proprietors of West New Jersey about 1695. This William Biddle of Mount Hope (whose grandsons removed to Philadelphia and founded there its most notable family) was evidently one of the wealthiest and most influential men in West New Jersey.

In 1703, at the marriage of his daughter Sarah (Biddle) Righton to her second husband, Clement Plumstead of Philadelphia, which took place by Quaker ceremony in her father's house (here surveyed), among many witnesses present were William Penn, Jr. (son of the Governor of Pennsylvania), Samuel Jennings (former governor of West New Jersey) and Roger Mompesson (first chief justice of New Jersey after the surrender of the colony's government to the Crown). The quarterly meeting of Friends (Quakers) for Burlington and Falls was held "at the House of William Beedle in Mansfield, being pretty near ye middle of friends belonging to it", as the minutes of the Yearly Meeting state. He had built "Biddle's Wharf" near the present Kinkora on the Delaware. An account of the succeeding owners of the Mount Hope estate and its house follows:

This William Biddle of Mt. Hope, Burlington County, in his will dated 23 June 1711 and proved 3 March 1711/12, devised inter al. (quote) All ~~that~~ my messuage or dwelling house and plantation wherein I now dwell, commonly called Mount Hope, with the 500 acres of land, with my Island in the River Delaware, opposite to my said plantation, called Biddle's Island, unto my son William Biddle and Lydia his wife during the term of their natural lives and of the life of the longer liver of them; and after the decease of the survivor of them then I devise the same unto my grandson William Biddle, son of my said son William Biddle, to the heirs and assigns of him my said grandson forever.

William<sup>2</sup> Biddle the son, married about 1695 Lydia Wardell, resided on the paternal estate devised to him for life as above, and died intestate in 1743.

William<sup>3</sup> Biddle the grandson and devisee, having removed to Philadelphia, with his (first) wife Anne (Holme) gave deed of 28 November 1724 to John Holme of the same place, conveying to him the Mt. Hope plantation and the house, but excepting 200 acres previously sold to Michael Newbold and Biddle's Island, for 75 pounds. Holme conveyed the same back to William Biddle by deed of 30 August 1726. The last named later sold a 150 acre tract from the plantation to his cousin, Thomas Biddle, by deed of 8 February 1741, including the house here surveyed and the other buildings, and in 1752 Thomas Biddle also purchased 59 acres adjacent on the north, another part of the original Mt. Hope estate.

This grantee Thomas Biddle (Jr.) had come from England to Burlington County under patronage of his cousin William Biddle, 2nd and 3rd, and he died there intestate in 1793, still in possession of the Mount Hope estate and its house, whereupon his real estate descended to his son Thomas Biddle 3rd, born in 1734.

By an unrecorded deed of 1793, Abigail wife of John Harvey, and Mary wife of Caleb Foster, conveyed to their brother, Thomas Biddle 3rd, above-named, all their undivided interest in their late father's estate, whereby the grantee came into full possession of the Mount Hope plantation and house.

By his wife Charlotte Butler, this Thomas Biddle 3rd, had issue viz., Thomas, Israel, Mary who married James Butler and Isaac Field, John, Charlotte who married Samuel Black, Achsah who married Joseph Haines, and William. The father died intestate in 1807, and accordingly, division of his real estate was made among his heirs, as reported to the Orphans Court held on 25 October 1813. In this partition lots No. 2 and No. 4 (on which latter stood the house here surveyed) was awarded to the son Israel Biddle, No. 4, being described as lying in Mansfield Township, extending south from the bank of Delaware River some 900 feet to the Burlington Road, and as containing 20 acres.

Charles Biddle and others, administrators of the estate of Israel Biddle above-named, late of Mansfield Township, Burlington County, deceased, conveyed the same 20 acre tract with the house to Martha F., wife of Thomas N. Black, for \$954.84, by deed of 1st April 1862, and the last named, with others, passed it to James Mason of Philadelphia on 18 March 1865. Mason and wife Agnes of Philadelphia, in turn conveyed the same to Anthony D. Byles, also of Philadelphia, by deed of 16 April 1868, which Byles, with wife Fanny, passed it to John Hall of Perth Amboy, New Jersey on 1st April 1869, and he with wife Sarah, of Mansfield Township, conveyed it to the Knickerbocker Ice Company of Maine, by deed of 21 March 1899, who conveyed it to the American Ice Company of New Jersey on 26 March 1900, from whom it passed to Angelo R. Sangiovanni and wife Hazel M., of Fieldsboro, in the same County, by deed of 8 January, 1932, and they are the owners and occupants at the time of our survey of this house 1939.

#### Bibliography:

A search of title in the Land and Probate records of Burlington County and of the Secretary of West New Jersey, by Oscar F. Benjamin, H.A.B.S. abstractor

Clement, John "A Sketch of William Biddle and Thomas Biddle", publ. in Penna. Mag. of Hist. and Biogr., vol. 14, pp. 364-386 (1890)

Lewis D. Cook  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

(for)